

The King's Dinner party

The great decisive match took place on the stage of the Sea of Bousou.

An intense confrontation between the goddess Athena, the war god Lancelot and the Campione Kusanagi Godou.

On that occasion, Seishuuin Ena valiantly fought alone and exhausted herself severely in mind and body.

Consequently, she was forcibly commanded to recuperate and stay obediently at the Seishuuin ancestral home in Chichibu.

Shut at home, recuperation had gone on for the past half a month. Once she obtained a doctor's authorization, she spent another half a month or so staying in the famous sacred site of the two divine mountains of Chichibu, to let the spiritual presence cleanse her body and mind.

As a result, as soon as she recovered, Ena descended from the mountains and headed towards the great metropolis, Tokyo, a place completely opposite to serenity and purity.

"I hate having to spend almost half a month at home pretending to be obedient... So bored I was about to die..."

The current location was the living room of a western mansion built during the Taishou period, located in Area 3 of the Chiyoda ward.

Overcome with all sorts of emotions, Ena exclaimed emphatically.

To an unfettered child of nature like her, this sort of temporary imposed recuperation was as unbearable as encountering "Rest for Twenty Rounds" when playing Game of Life.

"Finally I was able to come back... But anyway, Yuri and Liliana-san are really too sly."

Ena, whose personality was as straight as an arrow, was gazing at her friends with a slight sense of reproach.

"What do you mean, Seishuuin Ena?"

"Sly... On what grounds?"

Liliana Kranjcar asked with an expression of surprise while Mariya Yuri gracefully tilted her head in puzzlement.

Back in Tokyo once again, Ena had called them to the Sayanomiya residence to make a certain request.

This ancient and spacious western mansion was the possession of the Hime-Miko and Ena's childhood friend.

"Because, weren't things so busy and exciting while Ena was away? Everyone visited London, and fought with a god. I felt so jealous after hearing about it. Only Ena was left out. That's so not fun."

Ena was throwing a tantrum like a little child.

"Busy and exciting, eh..."

"You felt jealous, eh..."

A shadow of doubt enshrouded Yuri and Liliana's faces at the same time.

"I think the vast majority would not feel excited during that time. The only exceptions were probably Kusanagi Godou, as well as Alec -- Alexandre Gascoigne-sama."

The people Liliana named were their own king and England's young king. Her facial expression was a mixture of the worry over the series of commotions caused by the two Devil Kings combined with her self-reproach for failing to stop them.

"Those two were really too reckless... In the end, they even caused such calamity to befall Yokohama Bay Bridge."

Yuri bowed her head as if ashamed and shuddered.

Due to being deeply involved in the incident -- she must have been embarrassed for "participating" in the occurrence.

Nevertheless, Ena was jealous of them instead.

The news headlines reported that the Yokohama Bay Bridge underwent "An Unprecedented Accidental Collapse!"

Ena only found out after returning from the mountains, and as soon as she was informed of the truth, she slapped her thigh as if she suddenly realized.

As expected of His Majesty! Clearly if he had summoned Ena to help out, she could have raised hell as well!

"Hey hey, that time when His Majesty was affected by some strange curse, he became quite amazing, right? Basically, he's always been quite reckless but it feels like his destructive power went up a notch?"

"....."

"I've read the report, yes. But Yuri and Liliana-san, neither of you told me a single detail even though you were participants right there on the scene. I have no clue as to how amazing His Majesty was or in what manner. Could you take some pity on poor little injured Ena and tell me properly?"

"D...Denied! No matter what... This is too early for Seishuuin Ena to know!"

"A-Agreed. Furthermore, this concerns Godou-san's privacy after all. I believe it should not be probed so casually!"

For some reason, Liliana and Yuri's faces had become red with embarrassment as they instantly expressed rejection.

"Eh. You two are so stingy."

Ena pouted once again.

However, this was the characteristic of the lively, energetic, unfettered and open-minded Seishuuin Ena. She would not tactlessly pursue matters with people who disliked it. This was as far as she would ask here. That left asking Erica Blandelli, as well as the most involved participant, Kusanagi Godou himself.

"I guess I'd better ask His Majesty directly later?"

"...Possibly. But Kusanagi Godou will probably feel very embarrassed."

"...Having learnt a little lesson, hopefully he could act a little more cautiously from now on."

As Ena murmured softly, Liliana nodded and Yuri began to pray.

Regardless, this was an incident that Kusanagi Godou would find difficult to talk about.

How interesting. No matter what, she must get at the truth. Ena resolved herself.

"By the way, the reason I asked both of you out today, is to discuss something."

"Oh."

"If I may be of help, of course I would be glad to do so... But would Erica-san not be a better choice?"

Erica Blandelli was greatly gifted with clarity of mind.

She was also capable of caring after others like an open-minded salon mistress, and was unexpectedly diplomatic in her social interactions. Indeed it was as Yuri suggested, she was a most suitable candidate for seeking counsel.

But at this time, Liliana spoke up.

"Erica said she had some business and already left Tokyo yesterday. Furthermore, I believe it is best not to display too many of one's personal weaknesses to that woman... As much as I hate to admit it, suitably accepting Erica's advice is indeed beneficial. However, after who knows how many years, when she makes use of such knowledge as bargaining chips for deals or threats, it becomes kind of..."

Perhaps recalling her personal experiences, Liliana's speech gradually trailed off vaguely.

Oh well, because from Erica's perspective, Liliana was her closest friend who she interacted without any reservations. Hence, she was able to tease and make fun of her to no end. Ena spoke decisively:

"Actually Ena had no intention of seeking Erica-san in the first place. No matter what, this is a challenge that is equivalent to admitting 'inferiority' towards Erica-san. If I sought help from her, it would be a mess."

"So, it is about Erica-san?"

"Yes. That is why I prepared this thing."

As Yuri questioned in surprise, Ena confirmed and took out her new "partner."

It was a short blade. The cutting edge was carefully wrapped in white cloth. Ena unwrapped it in order to display her beloved blade's form to her friends.

A thick and wide hamaguri-ba^[1] blade, its sharp edge displayed slight curvature.

"It looks rather sharp."

"As expected of Liliana-san, you have good eyes! This thing here, was forged by the swordsmith's workshop near my home using the Doutanuki^[2] sword I took down from a wall at home. It was only being used as decoration anyway."

"Dou -- tanuki?"

As expected of one born and raised in Milan. The reference to the maker's name, Doutanuki Masakuni, was lost upon Liliana.

But given Ena's explanation, Liliana deduced easily enough.

"In any case, you mean that you took an ancient Japanese sword that was originally much longer, and reforged it into its current size!?"

"Eh, Ena-san, I know almost nothing of swords."

On the other hand, Yuri looked quite worried as she spoke.

"But is this not an extremely precious artifact? A work of artistry on the level of an important cultural asset..."

Japanese swords were branded at the bottom part of the blade itself.

In the reforging process, naturally there was no choice but to sever off that portion of the blade. Without the maker's inscription, the value of a Japanese sword as a work of art was naturally lost.

"It's not really an artifact of that level... Though the swordsmith who handled my reforging request was crying rivers. In any case, it's just something collecting dust in Ena's home."

Located at Chichibu, the Seishuuin ancestral residence stored many spears, bows, swords, armor and various armaments.

Due to being blood-related to the Seiwa Genji^[3] family of generals, the Seishuuin held vast collections of that nature. Normally, there would be no use for them other than artistic admiration in the current peaceful Heisei era. Nevertheless, Ena had taken them out for "practical" use many times.

"Practical use is the most important thing for tools."

"Still, there should be limits to wasting things."

As Liliana sighed, Ena replied, completely unfazed:

"Nothing of that sort. --In actual fact, Ena was trying all sorts of new things during the leisure of recuperation. Like asking swordsmiths to make blades using the principles of forging Japanese swords, or trying those convenient ceramic ones that don't rust. However, none of them were sharp enough, so in the end I had this one made."

Ena gazed at her "beloved blade," mesmerized.

Doutanuki blades were known for their unrefined construction which prioritized "practicality" over glamorous appearances. It was a blade embodying the beauty of robust functionality.

"Ceramic?"

Yuri's pretty eyes stared wide in surprise.

"Umm... You sound like you are talking about kitchen knives."

"Yes yes, that's the one. After reaching a draw in the cooking contest against Erica-san last time, Ena thinks it's time to improve her cooking level. So, I was thinking I should invest in tools first. It's really great that I found something suitable at home."

"In other words, that thing is not a weapon but a tool for cooking -- just an ordinary kitchen knife?"

"Yes."

Ena nodded in response to Liliana's question.

Then she took the short blade in question... Or rather, the kitchen knife and swung it.

Furthermore, this was a peerless masterpiece, the beloved blade of the "Hime-Miko of the Sword" Seishuun Ena, forged for the purpose of slicing all cooking ingredients cleanly in half.

Staring at that blade of simplicity and fortitude, Yuri and Liliana sighed simultaneously.

"In other words, this is something that cannot be bought simply with money. What would the going price be in the collector's market...?"

"I am guessing millions of yen at least..."

"So, now that the tool is ready, next comes the teachers, right? If you two are willing, please teach Ena all sorts of knowledge."

Ena knew very well that as a fellow model Yamato Nadeshiko, Yuri was a culinary master.

She had also heard of Liliana's substantial accomplishments in this area. Hence, Ena clapped her hands together before them and pleaded again.

"Please, this is my request of a lifetime!"

"Well, in that case... There is no particular reason to refuse."

"Same here. So how about we all try some cooking together this time?"

Liliana agreed readily and Yuri smiled calmly in agreement.

"Then we will teach you all sorts of things then, how about that?"

"Really!? Thank you so much! Ah, if there's no trouble, can we do it today? After all, strike while the iron is hot. Let's call His Majesty over later and let him try our cooking, how's that?"

"Immediately? --I do not really mind--But it is rather sudden."

Liliana stared wide. Ena decided to explain the situation.

"The night before I came to Tokyo, I met an acquaintance in the mountains who's a hunter. After being told that Ena was learning to cook, he said 'I've got some great ingredients' and shared a lot with me. So I had it couriered here to treat His Majesty and everyone else."

"Great ingredients?"

"Yes. High-class choice ingredients. Very rare."

"From the mountain... Some wild fowl or the sort?"

"Or perhaps wild mushrooms and vegetables?"

Clearly, Yuri and Liliana underestimated the mountains.

Ena smiled proudly ad said:

"Those things are not rare at all. It's a female black bear, over two metres tall. Over the past few days, it was prowling around the Saitama and

Gunma boundary, roaming across villages. I heard mister hunter say he spent a great deal of effort to kill it."

"...A bear?"

"...That is what you mean by high-class choice ingredients?"

"Yes. If it's cooked well it should be really tasty, that's what the guy said. Ena could only think of pot-stewed bear, but are there better ways to cook it?"

However, the two culinary masters were taken aback.

"S-Sorry. I have never cooked bear before..."

"Same here... Speaking of which, I have never eaten it either. What about you, Seishuuin Ena? If you frequent the mountains so much, you should have that kind of experience, right?"

"Unfortunately, no. Not even once."

Ena trained in the mountains for the purpose of purifying her body. Hence she was often performing religious abstinence.

Let alone fish, meat or any animal protein, even vegetables belonging to the onion or garlic families were prohibited, going as far as to abstain from grain crops. While training, she had trapped Iwana mountain trout and rabbits to eat before, but she never tried catching large beasts for this purpose.

"I see. Because while I was recuperating, His Majesty called me a few times to express sympathy, so I want to treat him as thanks. Black bear, what should we do with it..."

Muttering to herself, Ena folded her arms.

"Kusanagi-san did that? Then Ena-san would not be bored."

Yuri smiled as she said.

"Something like that. His Majesty gave me a call every couple days, chatting for thirty minutes or an hour or so about nothing particularly important. But for the half month I was stuck at home, that's the only happy thing to happen. Thanks to that, I gradually thought recuperation wasn't too bad after all."

"I see. To think that Kusanagi Godou would be so diligently attentive depending on the circumstances..."

On the other hand, Liliana was slightly envious.

"...I have never received any call from Kusanagi Godou except regarding official business. Chatting of a personal nature has never occurred even once."

"...Come to think of it, me neither."

Yuri also spoke with a sighing expression.

"However, given that he is neither completely reticent nor particularly talkative, it is acceptable that he does not call without purpose. Still, knowing that he can express this kind of care, it does make one feel like wanting to get deeper into things."

"Of course, doing that much for Ena-san whose health was in bad condition, can be considered an exceptional show of care. It would not be reasonable to complain about this point."

Hearing Liliana's sighing words, Yuri also lowered her gaze, slightly gloomy.

Unsure why the conversation was heading into a strange direction, Ena stared wide in puzzlement.

"However, regarding the fact that he 'only' showed Ena-san such care, I do feel slightly resentful..."

"Right, only slightly."

"Correct, only just a slight amount."

Reaching this conclusion, Yuri and Liliana nodded at the same time.

Next, Yuri slowly turned to Ena, a smile on her face.

It was a smile of classic elegance, like a crescent moon that illuminated the dark sky with exceptional brightness on a cold winter's night. Most likely, this was the sort of smile displayed whenever the beautiful queen of the moon was suddenly inspired by mischief.

"About the matter Ena-san proposed just now, I want to take good care of it."

"Eh? Which matter?"

"Regarding tonight, inviting Godou-san over and everyone having dinner together."

"That's not really much of a request... So what should we do with the black bear? Yuri, you've never cooked it before, right?"

"What? That poses no problem at all."

Liliana spoke with an extremely generous tone of voice.

"Did you not say so yourself, if you stew it in a pot, the meat basically becomes edible. No matter what manner of cooking, as long as the meat is no longer raw, there should be no problem... By the way, concerning Erica's maid's unique skills in this regard, I have heard rumors before."

"You mean Arianna-san, right? Speaking of which, indeed I have experienced her 'otherworldly' talent... Well then, let us invite her as well."

Yuri instantly proposed her idea and Liliana nodded vigorously.

"Wonderful idea. If I ask my maid Karen, she should be able to tell me her cellphone number. Seishuuin Ena, we will let you handle communications with Kusanagi Godou."

"Uh yeah. Got it."

Although things developed in a completely unexpected manner, the result still ended up as Ena had hoped.

If Kusanagi Godou came, she could also ask him about what happened with the war god Lancelot. Ena delightfully took out her cellphone but sighed at the discovery of the lack of battery power. She began searching her bag for the charger.

"I think things could be slightly more relaxing."

Kusanagi Godou declared solemnly.

The location was Akihabara, at a VIP room of the "Peerless Statesman" maid tea house run by Hong Kong's Lu family.

Godou and his young friend, the adopted "nephew" Lu Yinghua, as well as the History Compilation Committee special agent Amakasu Touma were gathered together.

"What do you mean slightly more relaxing? Isn't this extremely relaxing and leisurely already?"

Amakasu spoke with frivolous airs. He was still dressed in his usual creased and sloppy suit.

"Recently, the painful memories of smashing the Bay Bridge are still vivid."

"Hmm, well, that's true. But once in a while I get this kind of notion. Even for a month, no, only a week, if only I could travel the world without being accompanied by any of the girls I know, then my body and my mind would get some proper rest."

Amakasu was roughly twenty-seven or eight years old. Since he was senior in age, Godou naturally replied respectfully:

"Until my middle school graduation, my circle of close friends had boys outnumbering girls by a ratio of nine to one. Clearly that used to be the situation, but somehow I became surrounded by girls now..."

Even though this was perhaps a rather enviable position in others' view, that was what Godou truly felt.

Ah yes, it was definitely more relaxing in the past--

"I understand. I used to think that all the time as well."

The one who expressed agreement was the misogynist, Lu Yinghua. He was the direct disciple of Godou's "sworn elder sister," the demonic cult leader, Luo Cuilian.

Despite being a slender, dignified and handsome youth, he was an eccentric who treated "females" harshly no matter what.

"I became Master's disciple when I was around four or five years old. Thereafter, I spent about six years alone with Master at the Mount Lu convent to go through forced training -- rather, to train with great enthusiasm."

The arrogant prodigy spoke with a sense of mournfulness.

"Well, the only non-relative and female in my world is Luo Cuilian. Recalling her abuses -- rather, training and innumerable unreasonable demands, I feel a heavy sensation in my stomach."

"Ah... She is that kind of person after all."

"Living with a man-eating lion would probably be far happier and relaxing in comparison..."

Godou expressed sympathy as Amakasu muttered knowingly.

As a side note, Amakasu's boss was the silver-tongued womanizer, the cross-dressing beauty, Sayanomiya Kaoru(♀). Perhaps the three fellow males gathered here were all victims fated to suffer at the hands of women.

Just at this moment, Godou's cellphone began ringing with a lively tone.

Taking it out, he discovered it was a call from Seishuuin Ena.

"Hello? Ah, it's been a while. You came over? Eh, dinner with everyone? Later tonight... Wait a minute, Seishuuin, what was that again? Bear, is that right? If I'm not mistaken, the main theme will be black bear meat..."

Conversing with Ena over the phone, Godou accepted the dinner invitation.

Listening on the side, Lu Yinghua and Amakasu whispered privately to each other.

"In Chinese cuisine, isn't that a high-class ingredient?"

"Ah yes, the bear's paw. Said to be a rare delicacy, but other than that, there's a whole host of tasty dishes. By the way, doesn't Japan sell canned bear meat?"

"Canned curry bear. Bear meat has a distinctive flavor, so it's a delicacy limited to Hokkaido."

On the other hand, Godou was just about to hang up the phone.

"Then let's meet at seven tonight. Yeah, see you later... It became like this again, I'll be there for sure."

Godou hung up as he spoke.

"For some reason, Mariya and Liliana are apparently there together with Seishuuin. --By the way, Amakasu-san, would you like to go?"

"Unfortunately, I have work to do later."

Clearly slacking off at the maid tea house, the special agent replied calmly with a smile.

"What about you, Yinghua?"

"I would prefer to decline, Honored Uncle. You can't be suggesting that I spend my time at a place full of women, right?"

"That's true."

"Of course, if you say you need me to make a sacrifice, I will see things through to the utter end even if it meant wading through rivers of blood in purgatory on earth. If you have any need of my assistance, please feel free to ask."

"N-No need to go that far. I'm sorry for asking something strange."

Godou smiled wryly and left his seat, leaving the VIP room of the maid tea house.

Watching him leave, the remaining two exchanged glances.

"...Looks like it will turn out to be a most dangerous dinner gathering, I smell sparks in the air."

Rather than surprised, Amakasu muttered with an impressed tone of voice.

"A wise man would make up a plausible excuse and run like hell."

"What is going to happen? Who knows if notions of upright character, manners, thoughtfulness or the like are what secretly upholds Honored Uncle's supremacy."

"I believe he clearly could have avoided digging his own grave!"

As a side note, the person in question was completely oblivious to his impending doom.

On this very night, Kusanagi Godou was cornered in various ways, imprisoned in the sufferings of a desperate plight. However, seeing as they

were not omniscient gods, these two naturally had no way of knowing the details.

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References

1. ↑ Hamaguri-ba(蛤刃): A description for Japanese blades, describing one that is thick all along the blade. See [diagram](#) of cross-section.
2. ↑ Doutanuki(同田貫): the name of a school of swordsmiths from feudal Japan whose swords were renowned for their superior cutting ability.<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C5%8Dtanuki>
3. ↑ Seiwa Genji(清和源氏): the most successful and powerful line of the Japanese Minamoto clan that were descended from Emperor Seiwa, featuring many famous warriors.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seiwa_Genji

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